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The Literary Scene

JOHN BARKHAM

THE SECRET TEAM: The CIA and Its Allies in Control of the U.S. and the World. By Col. L. Fletcher Prouty (USAF Ret.) Prentice-Hall. 496 pp. \$8.95.

If this long, densely packed book is carefully read in Washington it should blow the roof off the CIA's headquarters building. It reveals more of the CIA's history, its clandestine operations and adroit cover-up tactics than any previously published book on the subject.

In all probability, however, it will not create the sensation it should, partly because of the stolidity and repetitiousness of its prose, partly because most Americans are just too shock-saturated to react as they ought. Foreign embassies, on the other hand, will doubtless study its pages with profit.

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Why, you ask, has Colonel Prouty been permitted to lift the lid on the inner workings of the CIA? Because he never belonged to the CIA and was not bound by its oath of secrecy. As an Air Force officer and former pilot he spent his last nine years of service in the Pentagon as the official Focal Point Officer through whom all CIA military activities were channeled.

He was, in his own words, one of the "behind-the-scenes, faceless, nameless, ubiquitous experts who brief Presidents and Secretaries of State." (Henry Kissinger at one time was another.) "In the CIA the briefing officer specialized in the high art of top-level indoctrination."

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One of the many shocks delivered in the book is its disclosure of deliberate fabrications disseminated by the CIA, usually through leaks. These are called "covers" because they are designed to conceal the truth.

The late Allen Dulles, first CIA head, was an expert in planting "covers" at lunches for prominent writers. "He would discuss openly the same subjects that only hours before had been discussed in the secret inner

chambers of the agency," recalls Prouty. "It is fantastic to find people like Daniel Ellsberg being charged with leaking official secrets because a label on the piece of paper said 'Top Secret' when the substance was patently untrue and no more than a cover story. Except for the fact that they were official lies, these papers had no basis in fact."

Dulles, adds Prouty, would tell similar stories which would thereafter appear in print. They were "cleverly untrue."

Even Defense Secretary Robert McNamara when he headed the Pentagon received skilled briefing "treatment" on his visits to Vietnam. "He would be in the custody of skilled briefers who knew what he should see, whom he should see, and whom he should not see. In many cases the messages, relayed from Saigon, ostensibly written by and for McNamara while he was there, had been sent to Saigon from Washington before he arrived there."

In due course the Secretary brought the report back to Washington and handed it to President Johnson. "It is difficult," adds Prouty drily, "not to yield to the urge to play God and make everything come out as desired."

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The book abounds in examples of such carefully planned and executed acts of official deviousness. One is left with impression that the CIA probably leads the world in sophisticated techniques of overt and covert deception. Five Presidents,

Prouty reminds us, have had to live with the CIA and watch it grow from a simple intelligence-gathering agency into a complex giant whose reach extends around the globe. "A parade of Secretaries of State have seen their power and influence dwindle and be eclipsed almost to extinction by the CIA . . . Like a terrible, haunting, terrorizing nightmare, the sinister machine pervades every aspect of the government today."

P - BARKHAM, JOHN
D - PROUTY, L. Fletcher
SOC 4.01.2 The Secret Team
Ellsberg, Daniel
CIA 1.01 Dulles, Allen